Author’s response to reviews

Title: Do patients prefer optimistic or cautious psychiatrists? An experimental study with new and long-term patients

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Author’s response to reviews:

Dear Professor Carta

Many thanks for your response to the submission of our manuscript “Do patients prefer optimistic or cautious psychiatrists? An experimental study with new and long-term patients”.

We have found comments by a reviewer and our response is as follows:

Reviewer #2: This is an interesting paper that focuses on aspects of psychiatric treatment that are often difficult to quantify, the demeanour and psychosocial approach of the therapist in relation to patient preferences. Matching therapeutic approach with the preference of the patient would help to establish the basis for a therapeutic alliance. For this reason, I commend the authors on the aim and design of the study. The paper is clearly laid out and well-written.

We thank the reviewer for the positive comments.

Having said that, I was a bit disappointed that there was not a fuller discussion of therapist optimism and its potential to engender hope in patients. I say this because hope is such a vital
aspect of recovery-oriented care. The authors could have speculated a bit more as to why those patients with more experience as mental health care consumers had no preference for optimism over cautiousness. I realise that there may not be much in the extant literature on which to draw, so any discussion in relation to this matter may be theoretical. Nonetheless, bringing out the issue of hope in the discussion would enable readers to at least consider its importance in mental health care.

As suggested we have expanded the discussion on this aspect. Under the subheading ‘implications’ in the discussion (new lines 299-301 and 308-311) we inserted some more evidence for the usual line that optimistic presentations are preferable with an additional reference from general practice. As suggested by the reviewer we also added a reference to the concept of hope, and expanded that the explanation for why optimistic presentations may not be so helpful in patients with longer experiences of care.

We are resubmitting our paper and hope that the revised paper will be acceptable for publication in BMC Psychiatry.

Kind regards

Stefan Priebe